**Past**

Though it has been twelve years, I’ll never forget my last day of second grade. When I think back on it, it’s like an out of body experience. I can see my face so clearly, red eyes about ready to burst, scrunched eyebrows as I carefully bit my lip. All I could think that day was how summer was just a few hours away, and yet it was something I dreaded. I loved school. I loved the colorful walls; I loved learning about simple machines, and reading The Magic Treehouse during free reading time. I loved when my teacher danced to the music on the morning announcements, but most of all, I loved knowing that I was going to learn something new every day. To everyone else school was repetitive, and playing was much more fun. To me, it was a chance to discover new worlds in books and escape from the boredom that would otherwise surround my day. I wanted to joust on a horse and ride spaceships to the moon. I wanted to sail on boats in the middle of the ocean and battle against pirates with all my favorite characters in my stories. The stories made life seem exciting, like there was so much out there in the world waiting to be captured, seen, and learned. Thinking back on it now, even as an eight year old, I wanted to learn about everything in the world. What didn’t occur to me until I got older was that I didn’t need to be in school to do that. Learning was all around me, even on summer vacation.

**Present:**

Beads of sweat streamed down Felo’s face as we stood upon the makeshift scaffolding, creating a building with our own hands. I still remember his gray and cracked hands, caked in layers of cement that were becoming a part of him. But this was everyday life to him, nothing new or exciting, just normal. I looked down at my own hands, protected in my gloves. Why did I need them? Why couldn’t I feel what it would be like to have cement under my nails and calluses on my palms. A part of me wanted to feel that, to get the full experience of what it meant to be a worker in the Dominican Republic. Felo never owned a pair of gloves. His work came from his own strength, from the blisters between his fingers to the bruises on his arms from carrying heavy rocks. One day I asked him, “How do you know how to make a building, use rebar, or even make cement from the debris around you?” To me it was a logical question. These tasks were ones I wouldn’t have even known how to begin without help. I was in college, and I considered myself intelligent, but until he taught me how to do those things, I would have never known how to go about it. But Felo just looked at me confused and replied, “This is all I’ve ever done.” I realized in that moment that Felo may not be educated in the same way that I am, or that my friends and family are, but in certain areas he’s brilliant. Felo knows how to work on a farm; he knows how to use a pickaxe, and how to bend rebar. He can do everything with his own hands, no machines necessary. The people of the Dominican Republic and Felo, have encouraged me to see the world, and discover and learn all that I can. I don’t need to just read things in books like I did as a little girl, I can actually go find adventures for myself.

**Future:**

Italy, Ireland, China, Egypt. I will make it to all of them, one day, and I won’t feel complete with my life until I do. For as long as I can remember, I’ve dreamt of traveling. My bedroom wall is full of postcards showing some of the most beautiful places in the world: the pyramids, the coliseums, The Leaning Tower of Pisa. People say for a dream to come true, you need to fight for it, pursue it, and when it’s in your reach, take it! And that’s what I plan to do. Unlike a lot of people who want to see the resorts all over the world, I want to see the country. I want to see the mountains of Japan and work alongside people struggling to get by. I want to experience the culture of every place I visit, and immerse myself in the society. I see myself teaching all over the world one day, to discover what they value in education, and what their school systems are all about. Maybe children only go to school until they’re old enough to work. Maybe they need to pass a test to continue. I want to find out what every place believes and their reasoning for their choices. I will step out of my comfort zone and try exotic foods and try new dances, even though I have no rhythm. I can see myself walking down cobblestoned paths in England and thinking back on my life and how much I’ve learned through the years. This way, I never have to look back on my life and wish I saw or did more. I never want to wonder what’s out there beyond the Atlantic Ocean. I want to teach the youth all over the world about where I come from and what I value, and discover what is important to them, what worries them, and inspire them to find a dream and race towards it. I once read a quote by D.H.Lawrence. He said: “All people dream, but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their mind, wake in the morning to find that it was vanity. But the dreamers of the day are dangerous people, for they dream their dreams with open eyes, and make them come true.” I want to be a dreamer of the day.